

Health of Home and School.

LEAFLET NO. 37.

ISSUED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF MAINE.

Hygiene of the Foot.

The changes in the feet caused by wearing ill-fitting shoes not only cause much inconvenience and suffering, but the persons who are the victims of bad shoes may be forced by pain and incapacity to give up positions which they would like to occupy. Many young men have been rejected as recruits to our military service or as applicants of positions as patrolmen or firemen in our cities on account of weak feet or flat-footedness. Many nurses have been discharged from hospital service on account of the breaking down of feet which have worn bad shoes.

But this is not all. Symptoms due to these foot troubles are not always referred to the feet. It may seem strange, but it is true that the pain or discomfort is often felt in the calf, the knee, thigh, or hip, even when the diseased condition is in the foot alone. Persons who have been crippled by what they have termed rheumatism, sciatica, and neuralgia, in regions far above the foot have been cured by relieving the flattened arch or other foot troubles.

The Causes of Weak Foot.

The following are the principal causes of flat-foot: (1) Ill-fitting shoes throw the toes out of line and interfere with the normal action of the muscles in the proper development of the foot. (2) High heeled shoes if long worn, sometimes cause serious trouble by permanently shortening the heel ligaments. (3) Deformities of the toes due to their being thrown out of line by badly shaped shoes are often the beginning of more serious foot symptoms, for instance, flattening of the arch and a splay-footed gait. (4) Corns, bunions, and ingrowing toenails cause a person to stand or walk with the feet in unnatural positions; causing strain which leads to deformity. (5) Lack of proper exercise of the feet untrammelled by faulty shoes.

Correction of Foot Troubles.

The troubles of the feet which have been mentioned in this leaflet and in Leaflet No. 36 may, if far advanced, need the services of the surgeon or the advice of some person more of an adept than is the ordinary shoe dealer in giving temporary mechanical help to those parts of the foot which need it. But troubles which have for some time been present are often greatly improved or cured by intelligently applied efforts at correction.